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## RECENT BOOKS ABOUT AMERICAN BISHOPS \*

The appearance within the past few months of an unusual number of reminiscences, memoirs and biographies of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the prospect of other similar publications in the near future, suggest that a popular interest in the American Episcopate is awakening. There have been Bishops in the American Church for nearly a century and a quarter, and the list of the "American Succession," published in the Church Almanacs and Year Books, has been extended to include the one hundred and thirty-sixth name, and there are several Bishops-elect awaiting consecration. In this long list there are names of some great men, distinguished not only in their relation to the Church, but in other and wider relations. A few years ago a life of Bishop White, of Pennsylvania, (the second on the list of the American Succession), was included in a series of biographies of the "Makers of America," and there have been other Bishops to whom a similar tribute might be paid. Of the Bishops who have gone to their rest, a few were regarded as worthy of especial commemoration in octavo volumes, varying in size, number and sumptuousness with the wealth — not of material — but of the friends who financed their publication, (for they have for the most part the appearance of private publications), and the poverty of biographic materials is evidenced by the resort to letters, sermons and addresses to bring

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\* REMINISCENCES OF BISHOPS AND ARCHBISHOPS. By Henry Codman Potter, Bishop of New York. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

REMINISCENCES OF A MISSIONARY BISHOP. By the Rt. Rev. D. S. Tuttle, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Missouri. New York: Thomas Whittaker.

MY PEOPLE OF THE PLAINS. By the Rt. Rev. Ethelbert Talbot, D.D., S.T.D., Bishop of Central Pennsylvania. New York: Harper & Bros.

MEMOIRS AND REMINISCENCES OF FREDERICK DAN HUNTINGTON, FIRST BISHOP OF CENTRAL NEW YORK. By Arria S. Huntington. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company.

RICHARD HOOKER WILMER, SECOND BISHOP OF ALABAMA: A BIOGRAPHY. By Walter C. Whitaker, Rector of St. John's Church, Knoxville, Tennessee. Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co.

the volumes up to what has been considered the proper size. Some of the Bishops of the same period furnished volumes of reminiscences partaking in most cases of the nature of autobiographies. About the middle of the nineteenth century, the Rev. John Norton wrote for Sunday School libraries a dozen or more 16mo. lives of the Bishops, which deserve a better fate than has been theirs, for they are valuable contributions to the history of the Church in America. Dr. Batterson's "Hand-book of the American Episcopate" furnished the most meagre biographical notes of the members of the Episcopate down to the one hundred and fifty-seventh, laying more stress in each case upon inconsequential details than upon some matters which would have been of wider interest. Bishop Perry's "The Episcopate in America," gave fuller biographical sketches written in something like literary style, brought down to a later date, and each was accompanied by a full page portrait which made the book of some value.

The second volume of Dr. Polk's life of "Leonidas Polk, Bishop and General," published in 1893, was taken up with the military career of the distinguished subject, which was the evident reason for the existence of the book, and though a valuable contribution to American biographies, was more of a military than an ecclesiastical biography. In like manner, A. V. G. Allen's "Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks" one of the most remarkable biographies of recent years, is scarcely to be considered in the category of Episcopal biographies, for its subject was in the Episcopate for less than three years, and will always be remembered as the preacher par excellence of the American Church rather than as Bishop Brooks. Bishop Wilmer's "Recent Past," Bishop Kip's "Early Days of My Episcopate," Bishop Whipple's "Lights and Shadows of a Long Episcopate," and Bishop Clark's "Reminiscences," all of them autobiographic in style, and a posthumous edition of Bishop Quintard's "Memoirs of the War," fairly represent the Episcopate of a middle period. We should be disposed to regard the late Professor White's lives of Bishop Cobbs ("A Saint of the Southern Church"), 1897, and Bishop Kemper a few years later, compact in form, readable in style — showing a proper sense of propor-

tion, and without padding — as representing a new era in the production of Episcopal biographies, and if the present prospect of a popular interest in the Episcopate be realized, the writers who prepare the biographies will do well to accept these two as models.

The above review of the field of Episcopal biographies in the past is by no means intended to be complete or exhaustive, but it is suggestive that little has been done in the past towards informing the reading public of the lives of the men whose services for the Church, and oftentimes for the State, are now beginning to loom large in the public mind, and we hail with delight the five books now before us, as giving more information regarding the personal lives of some of the bishops, than was heretofore to be found in Biographical Encyclopædias or *Who's Who*, or in any of the various handbooks. And we take them up for consideration from the standpoint of how far they are contributions to the biographies of the Episcopate in America.

Bishop Potter's book is disappointing so far as the American bishops are concerned, though it treats of ten very interesting bishops, Smith of Kentucky, Whittingham of Maryland, Williams of Connecticut, Eastburn of Massachusetts, Clark of Rhode Island, Coxe of Western New York, Wilmer of Louisiana, Clarkson of Nebraska, Brooks of Massachusetts, and Dudley of Kentucky.

As Secretary of the House of Bishops from 1866 to 1884, and since then as the Bishop in a metropolitan see; in all having the most intimate knowledge of the Bench of Bishops extending over forty years, surely the Rt. Rev. Dr. Potter could have better fulfilled the promise of his title-page and preface than he has done. So much of the book is drawn from other sources than the author's own memory, that the reader begins to wonder why the Bishop of New York should have undertaken the work which he felt, as he tells us in his preface, should be done, that is the supplying of the personal note, not conspicuous in some cases, not recognized in the histories already written of the men who have composed the House of Bishops within the past forty years. Had what the Bishop has done for three Archbishops of England in the concluding chapter of the book been

done for the ten American Bishops of his selection, or even for a smaller number, the book would have been more satisfying. Readable it certainly is, but the reader would probably prefer to find its contents in the pages of a popular magazine than in a book giving promise of being a permanent contribution to the history of the past forty years of the Church's life.

Of the other four books, two are personal reminiscences, the third avowedly a memoir, and the fourth is termed, and rightly, a biography. The first two are related and yet are very wide apart in their character. Bishop Tuttle, now the Bishop of Missouri and Presiding Bishop of the American Church, the senior by consecration of the Bishops now living, was a pioneer in missionary enterprises in the Rocky Mountain region when life was exceedingly crude in that region. He was and is a rugged type of manhood, and he endured the hardships of his early career of nineteen years uncomplainingly, and did good work for the Church and for his fellowmen. In course of time the boundaries of his jurisdiction were changed and contracted and he went to live in Salt Lake City, where he came in contact with the Mormon problem.

Here are the materials for an interesting book, a contribution to the history of missionary enterprises, some sidelights upon the perplexing problem of a strange religious people and upon crude frontier life with its throwing off of the conventional restraints of society. The Bishop tells his story in his own way, which is autobiographic and of deep interest to the thousands who know him. Though his book fails as a literary production in many instances, it adds much to our knowledge of the Church and its work under conditions which have now passed away.

In a division which took place in Bishop Tuttle's original jurisdiction, a Missionary district was formed comprising Idaho and Wyoming, and to this jurisdiction the Rev. Ethelbert Talbot was elected and consecrated Bishop. He was eleven years later translated to a diocese in Pennsylvania. Looking back upon his experiences after they had been closed for nearly that length of time, the years of his missionary episcopate seem to him much as other men would regard a camping out, a hunt-

ing or fishing trip, or a picnic, and as such he writes of them for a popular class of readers. His "people of the plains" furnish him with some interesting experiences and he tells them most delightfully, so delightfully in fact that his book fails as a contribution to the history or economics of the Church. Even his chapter on the Indian and another on the Mormon do not add materially to the reader's insight into the problems which these have precipitated upon the American people. The book is an entertaining one. Its evident purpose in that regard is abundantly fulfilled. Some of its chapters appeared in advance in the pages of one of the more dignified and conservative of our popular magazines.

Bishop Huntington of Central New York was a man of unusual early religious experiences, having been first a Unitarian, and then a Congregationalist, and having served in the ministry of each of these bodies before coming into the Episcopal Church. He was consecrated first Bishop of Central New York in 1869, and was thirty-five years a Bishop, dying in 1904 at the age of eighty-five. His was a poetic temperament and a deeply spiritual nature. The memoir of this distinguished prelate which his daughter has prepared for us, has caught the temperament and spirit of the subject, and the first thought that comes to the reader is the exquisite sense of proportion and the delicate taste of the book. The volume is precisely of the character which the many thousands to whom the Bishop's writings have been helpful as they have sought the way of righteousness and to walk therein, will wish to possess. And while it disclaims being in any sense a biography, the number of quoted letters make it almost autobiographic. We regard this book as worthy of a place among the best of American biographies.

Richard Hooker Wilmer occupied a unique position in the American succession. He was the only Bishop consecrated in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America. He was called upon to make the fight in the United States for the independence and supremacy of the Church in things spiritual as against the domination of civil and military authority. He was "the last Bishop of that era in which the individuality of the Bishop so often dominated and overshadowed

the individuality of the Diocese." His was a strong personality, "with a wit naturally destructive;" he was exceedingly quick at repartee, the originator of many bright sayings and witty stories which have gone around the world and have often been appropriated by other clerical raconteurs. His chief characteristic, as his biographer regards it, was his "rectangular massiveness." Wilmer was not a man to seek for precedents to influence his conduct in any given crisis. He argued what was right conduct from the principles involved, and established precedents which others might follow with safety if they chose. It is because of his attitude and conduct at the close of the Civil War in regard to the General Orders No. 38 of the Military Government, whereby he and his clergy were forbidden to preach or perform divine service, and their churches were closed until the Bishop and clergy resumed the use of the prayer for the President of the United States, and his subsequent attitude toward the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, that this volume is a distinct contribution to the history of the Church in the Confederate States, a history which awaits the writing. The biographer, whose admirable sense of proportion had been previously displayed in his history of the Diocese of Alabama, has exercised the same sense of proportion very happily in this case, with the result that we have in this life of Bishop Wilmer of Alabama, a valuable contribution to the biographies of the American Church.

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